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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3350
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5686
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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5968
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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0796
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 1213
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RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000138

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OPRC KMDR IS

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

All media bannered with greetings and welcome to President Obama on his historic inauguration day.

Starting at 17:00 local time, all electronic media will carry live

transmission of the ceremony and the speech of the President, along with stories coming out from their Washington-based correspondents as well as panels discussing the new administration.

All media report that the security establishment fears that the center (Gush Dan) of Israel might soon fall within the range of Hamas rockets. Maariv reported that Hamas and Iran are now trying to smuggle into Gaza long-range Farj rockets, which can reach 75 kilometers.

Maariv reported that today is the last chance for President Bush to pardon convicted spy Jonathan Pollard.

11. Mideast

Summary:

Veteran journalist Eitan Haber wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "[And] we, in our little corner, in the Middle East, in Israel, are tensely waiting to see whether you will continue the tradition of American presidents of the past number of generations and will view us as allies, as your forward aircraft carrier in this bloody part of the world; will you will bequeath to us from the great abundance of America or will we be for you, heaven forbid, a nation like all other nations? ..."

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: " Obama, whose rise to power makes him the hope of many people around the world, would do well to personally, and quickly, renew the effort to achieve a stable peace that reconciles Israel with Syria and the Palestinians. Obama's grace period won't last long; would that he use it for the benefit of the Middle East."

Shlomo Avineri, former FM's DG, wrote in independent, left-leaning, Ha'aretz (1/20): He needs to invest every effort in finding ways to tone down the conflict and creating mechanisms to build mutual trust. ..The Palestinians need assistance in building their institutions. The Israeli presence in the West Bank must be drastically reduced and the expansion of settlements prevented. Gaza needs to be rebuilt - but without rebuilding Hamas' regime there.

Well-known Israeli author David Grossman bannered on page one of the independent' left-leaning Ha'aretz: "We must speak [to the Palestinians], because what has happened in the Gaza Strip over the last few weeks sets up a mirror in which we in Israel see the reflection of our own face - a face that, if we were looking in from the outside or saw it on another people - would leave us aghast. We would see that our victory is not a genuine victory, and that the war in Gaza has not healed the spot that so badly needs a cure, but only further exposed the tragic and never-ending mistakes we have made in navigating our way

Conservative, independent, The Jerusalem Post editorialized: "so long as Hamas remains an unrepentant enemy of peace; so long as it is full-throttle committed to violence; so long as it refuses to recognize the right of the Jewish people to a homeland anywhere; and so long as it won't abide by the Palestinians' international commitments, Hamas can never legitimately be part of the solution in Gaza."

David Horovitz , Editor-in-Chief of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post, analyzed "Israel can expect to find the incoming Obama administration unsympathetic, as its predecessors have been, to any expansion of settlements, and probably more critical than was the Bush administration as regards broken Israeli government promises to dismantle illegal outposts..."

Russian-language conservative daily Vesty reported: "GOI made a gift [dedicated] to the inauguration day.... Most probably there will be no Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip at the time [of inauguration] and Obama won't have to start his presidential term dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

Block Quotes:

II. Hail to the Chief; Wishing You Good Luck , Mr. President Veteran journalist Eitan Haber wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist *Yediot Aharonot* (1/20): "-- Once you enter the Oval Office in the White House this evening, you won't be the private president of 300 million Americans any more. You will be the president of the free world, and billions will turn their eyes to you from today onward in prayer and in hope.... The entire world will hearken to your every word, whisper and winks, and will want to see you as the savior and redeemer of all the troubles of the world... And we, in our little corner, in the Middle East, in Israel, are tensely waiting to see whether you will continue the tradition of American presidents of the past number of generations and will view us as allies, as your forward aircraft carrier in this bloody part of the world; will you will bequeath to us from the great abundance of America or will we be for you, heaven forbid, a nation like all other nations? ..."

II. "With the power of hope"

Independent, left-leaning *Ha'aretz* editorialized (1/20): "You don't have to be an American to get excited by the swearing-in of Barack Obama as president of the United States today.... It's a great moment for Obama, but even greater for the American people, who are once again teaching humanity a lesson on the ability to adapt, change and ascend.... The Israeli-Arab conflict will be one of the Obama administration's many challenges. Obama, whose rise to power makes him the hope of many people around the world, would do well to personally, and quickly, renew the effort to achieve a stable peace that reconciles Israel with Syria and the Palestinians. Obama's grace period won't last long; would that he use it for the benefit of the Middle East.

III. "Can Obama do it?"

Shlomo Avineri, former FM's DG, wrote in independent, left-leaning, *Ha'aretz* (1/20):

It's hard to count the proposals made to Barack Obama on the appropriate way to deal with the Israeli-Arab conflict.... All the proposal-makers focus on how to reach a final peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, and all of them believe that deeper, more determined involvement by the United States will bring that about. In discussing past failures in U.S. policy on the issue, the proposal-makers always offer explanations that pertain to the details of each case, as one would expect from diplomats who can't see the forest for the trees. None of them raises the core question - whether the United States is at all capable of resolving complicated national conflicts, or whether the failures we've seen stem from a single, essential issue. ... It merits mentioning that in the Middle East, the United States is capable of achieving success only in two scenarios. When there is a war, it can end it or temper it. When the parties reach an agreement on their own but still have a few issues that need resolving - as during the visit by Egyptian president Anwar Sadat or when negotiating the Oslo Accords... In the absence of these two scenarios, and lacking the political will of at least one party, the United States has invariably failed, as could be observed from the Madrid Conference to the Camp David Summit in 2000, the road map and Annapolis - all highly photogenic events that failed to spawn a peace accord. In all this diplomatic verbosity, the gulf between the two parties is too wide on core issues like Jerusalem, refugees and borders. The Palestinians' inability to form a representative national entity and resolve the differences between Fatah and Hamas through nonviolent means renders negotiations with Israel meaningless. This is the reality with which Obama must contend, and with caution. He needs to invest every effort in finding ways to tone down the conflict and creating mechanisms to build mutual trust. .. The Palestinians need assistance in building their institutions. The Israeli presence in the West Bank must be drastically reduced and the expansion of settlements prevented. Gaza needs to be rebuilt - but without rebuilding Hamas' regime there. Should Obama attempt to initiate a dramatic move such as the 2000 Camp David Summit, he will receive some momentary glory and flattering media coverage, but he is destined to fail. He would do better to try to attain what is attainable.

IV. " Israel's success in Gaza only proves it is strong, not right" Well-known Israeli author David Grossman bannered on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (1/20): "Like the pairs of foxes in the biblical story of Samson, tied together by their tails, a flaming torch between them, so Israel and the Palestinians - despite the imbalance of power - drag each other along.... we should be paying heed to another voice - the one that says the Israel Defense Forces' successes in the confrontation with Hamas do not prove that it was right to embark on such a massive campaign.... Obviously, the Palestinians cannot be let off the hook for their crimes and mistakes.....We cannot pardon the Palestinians or treat them forgivingly, as if it were obvious that whenever they feel put upon, violence will always be their sole response, the one they embrace almost automatically. Yet even when the Palestinians act with indiscriminate violence, when they use suicide bombings and Qassam rocket fire, Israel is stronger than them... One day, after all, we will seek to heal the wounds we inflict today. How will that day ever come if we do not understand that our military might cannot be the primary instrument for carving out a path for ourselves in this region? How will that day ever come if we fail to comprehend just how graveness is the responsibility that lies on our shoulders by dint of our complex and fateful relations, both past and future, with the Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Galilee? When the clouds of colored smoke dissipate from the politicians' claims of sweeping and decisive victory; when we discover the actual achievements of this operation, and how far they are from what we really need in order to live a normal life here; when we finally admit that a whole country eagerly hypnotized itself, because it needed so badly to believe that Gaza would cure it of Lebanon-itis - maybe then we will settle accounts with those who, time after time, incite the Israeli public, whipping them into a frenzy of arrogance and a euphoria of power. Those who have taught us over the years to scoff at belief in peace and any hope for change in our relations with the Arabs. Those who have convinced us that the Arabs understand only force, and therefore that is the only language we can use in our dealings with them. We must speak to the Palestinians: That is the most important conclusion from the most recent round of bloodshed. We must speak also to those who do not recognize our right to exist here.... We must speak to them, and create, within this closed-off, deaf reality, the very possibility for speech....We must speak to them as part of a calculated strategy.... We must speak out of understanding, born as we look out at the horrible devastation, as we grasp that the harm we are capable of inflicting on each other, each people in its own way...We must speak, because what has happened in the Gaza Strip over the last few weeks sets up a mirror in which we in Israel see the reflection of our own face - a face that, if we were looking in from the outside or saw it on another people - would leave us aghast. We would see that our victory is not a genuine victory, and that the war in Gaza has not healed the spot that so badly needs a cure, but only further exposed the tragic and never-ending mistakes we have made in navigating our way.

IV. "The True Test"

Conservative, independent, The Jerusalem Post editorialized (1/20): "By the time Barack Obama is sworn in today as America's 44th president, every Israeli soldier, save for Gilad Schalit, will likely be out of Gaza. And as President Obama starts his first full day at the White House tomorrow, Hamas will already be setting the stage for the next conflagration.... Ordinary Gazans, much as they are wont to identify with Hamas's delusional sense of triumph, will find their gratification tempered by coming face-to-face with the price paid for Hamas's "achievements"... WE WILL know soon enough whether Operation Cast Lead achieved its purpose. The test is not whether there is "quiet" in the south while the terrorist organizations take a break. The true test is whether Hamas is allowed to realize its "holy" plan to rearm. Using all its intelligence capabilities, the IDF needs to intervene the moment Gaza's workshops resume producing Kassams, the instant its laboratories renew the production of explosives, the minute tunnels under the Philadelphia Corridor are refurbished for the smuggling of weapons and arms supplies. Failure to act without delay will return Israel to the intolerable state of affairs that prevailed during the eight years prior to December 27, 2008....Be that as it may, beyond doing the obvious - making certain that those who brought devastation upon Gaza aren't given the wherewithal to do so again by rearming - Europe and the international community need to restrain

themselves and not turn Hamas into the project manager and chief financial officer for the reconstruction of the Strip... Indeed, so long as Hamas remains an unrepentant enemy of peace; so long as it is full-throttle committed to violence; so long as it refuses to recognize the right of the Jewish people to a homeland anywhere; and so long as it won't abide by the Palestinians' international commitments, Hamas can never legitimately be part of the solution in Gaza. Not even under the fig leaf of a Palestinian unity government."

VI. "No to Hamas, but no, too, to an expanded Israel"

David Horovitz, Editor-in-Chief of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post, analyzed (1/20): "[And] Welcome..., to Barack Obama, the agent of change who, according to his senior adviser David Axelrod, "intends to engage early and aggressively with diplomacy all over the world... I think you'll see him act quickly." Conventional wisdom has it that Israel chose to engage aggressively with Hamas over the past three weeks because it knew, give or take the odd United Nations Security Council abstention and diplomatic spat, that the Bush administration would fundamentally support its right to protect its civilians from rocket attack even at the cost of widespread damage to Gaza. Conventional wisdom further has it that Israel is intent on getting its troops back out of Gaza by Tuesday's inauguration, provided the new fragile truce hasn't been too rudely shattered by rocket fire, so that Israel-Hamas is not the most pressing item on the incoming president's foreign policy hot list....Israel's worry, according to such wisdom, was that Obama, who has said he was "deeply concerned" about the loss of civilian life in Gaza and Israel, might not fully back the resort to force and might even break international ranks by opening a dialogue with Hamas. After all, this is the man who has said he will depart from Bush's policies and entertain tough diplomacy with Iran and Syria. Within the Obama camp itself, however, there is an adamant insistence that the new president has no intention of legitimizing Hamas... But if Israeli anxiety seems misplaced as regards Obama's empathy with Israel over the Kassams and his antipathy to Hamas in Gaza, his attitude to the future of the West Bank may indeed prove to pose concerns and challenges, and not only for the most strident and uncompromising supporters of the settlement enterprise... To listen to Nicolas Sarkozy in Jerusalem on Sunday night, this kind of Israeli-Palestinian deal, indeed a wider regional "great final peace plan," is there for the taking, if only Israel would "run the risk of achieving peace." It is unlikely that the pragmatic Obama is as ready as the French president to ignore such inconvenient realities as Hamas's enduring dominance of Gaza, its vast support among ordinary Gazan and West Bank Palestinians, and the failure to date of even the relatively moderate Palestinian Authority headed by Mahmoud Abbas to publicly espouse viable positions for a two-state solution.... Nevertheless, Europe will be pushing for a final deal and urging increased American pressure for compromise on both Israel and the PA. Many prominent European leaders, moreover, will be arguing to the new US administration that the shared interest in thwarting Iran's nuclear drive requires progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track - to keep relatively moderate Arab states on board, and to deny Iranian-backed Islamists like Hamas and Hizbullah a key recruiting tool... In terms of the contours of a permanent accord, Obama, in the brief interview he gave the Post when he visited Israel last July, showed an absence of any Bush-style instinctive sympathy for an expanded Israel. On settlements, he said "Israel should abide by previous agreements and commitments that have been made, and aggressive settlement construction would seem to violate the spirit at least, if not the letter, of agreements that have been made previously... There are those who would argue that the more settlements there are, the more Israel has to invest in protecting those settlements and the more tensions arise that may undermine Israel's long-term security."... Israel can expect to find the incoming Obama administration unsympathetic, as its predecessors have been, to any expansion of settlements, and probably more critical than was the Bush administration as regards broken Israeli government promises to dismantle illegal outposts.... As much as the European leaders' Jerusalem gathering on Sunday was a stand-by-Israel photo op, it was also an unprecedentedly vigorous "let's push for a deal" plea to the new America of Barack Obama.... We are about to find out...."

VII. "Waiting for the President"

Russian-language conservative daily Vesty reported (1/20): "Today the inauguration of President-Elect Barack Obama will take place. He will swear in his faith to the interests of the country and

American people on the Bible that was used at the inauguration ceremony of the 16th US President Abraham Lincoln. ... Many world leaders already greeted Obama on his inauguration. GOI made a gift [dedicated] to the inauguration day as well. Most probably there will be no Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip at the time [of inauguration] and Obama won't have to start his presidential term dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict... at least, not from the first day of his presence in the White House."

CUNNINGHAM